A PHILOSOPHICAL & LITERARY INQUIRY

THE CRAFT OF BEING

Life, Literature, and the Architecture of Human Characterization

NNAJI MISHEAL OFFOR

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Dedicated to all searchers of truth, to the readers who seek themselves in the pages of literature, and to every human character striving to understand the divine script written upon the canvas of existence.

"All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players;

They have their exits and their entrances,

And one man in his time plays many parts..."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *AS YOU LIKE IT*

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PREFACE

The Mirror and the Mold: An Introduction to Literary Existence

Literature has long been celebrated as the mirror through which humanity gazes upon its own reflection. Yet as we delve deeper into the mechanics of storytelling, we quickly realize that literature is far more than a passive silvered glass reflecting existing realities. It is an active, living force, a mold that shapes human consciousness, an intellectual sanctuary where moral dilemmas are stress tested, and a sacred tapestry wherein the human spirit contemplates its origins, purpose, and ultimate destiny.

In writing *The Craft of Being*, my intention was not merely to compose another textbook on literary analysis or character study. Rather, this volume was born out of a profound conviction that the boundary between literary art and human life is infinitely porous. The very tools that a literary critic employs to dissect a novel, including characterization, plot progression, conflict, setting, tragic flaws, and poetic justice, are the exact same analytical instruments needed to make sense of our personal journeys on earth.

Every individual walking this planet is both a living protagonist and a narrative work in progress. We move through specific historical settings, wrestle with antagonist forces, carry unique physical and psychological traits, and face choices that either lead toward personal comedy, fulfillment, redemption, and joy, or toward tragic collapse. By bridging the gap between classical literary theory, African creative literature, and theological wisdom, this book invites the reader to step onto the grand stage of self examination.

It is my sincere hope that as you navigate these pages, you will not only gain a richer appreciation for literary masterpieces such as Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, and Alex Agyei-Agyiri's *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*, but that you will, above all, discover your own identity as a purposefully authored being in the universe.

Nnaji Misheal Offor

CHAPTER ONE

The Literary Concepts of Characters and Characterization

In the vast and intricate landscape of storytelling, whether framed within sweeping epic narratives, intense dramatic plays, or subtle modern prose, characters occupy the undisputed center of gravity. They are the living vessels through which an author breathes vitality, emotional nuance, and existential purpose into an otherwise silent, inanimate manuscript. Without characters, a literary work remains an empty shell, a void devoid of conflict, emotion, or narrative direction.

To fully grasp the mechanics of storytelling, one must begin with a foundational proposition: a character is any entity, be it a human being, an anthropomorphized animal, a supernatural figure, or an inanimate object endowed with sentient consciousness, that participates in the action of a narrative. Characters are the indispensable building blocks of fictional universes. Through their movements, decisions, dialogues, and internal monologues, authors construct the illusion of living reality within the confines of paper and ink.

The Creation Narrative of Fictional Worlds

There exists a striking conceptual parallel between the theological creation of the physical world and the creative genesis of a literary universe. According to ancient biblical texts, the primordial universe was initially without form and void, shrouded in darkness until divine consciousness spoke light, life, and living beings into existence. It was only when living creatures populated the

earth, the seas, and the skies that the cosmos acquired form, function, and purpose.

In precisely the same manner, a literary work prior to the introduction of characters is merely an unformed landscape, a static setting waiting for breathing souls to walk its pathways. The moment an author introduces a protagonist, sets up an antagonist, and populates the background with supporting figures, the narrative universe awakens. Every conflict that ignites, every moral dilemma that unfolds, and every emotional resolution that takes place revolves entirely around these literary entities.

Taxonomy of Characters in Literature

Literary criticism classifies characters into distinct categories based on their functional significance to the plot, their psychological complexity, and the degree of change they undergo throughout the narrative arc.

Major Characters (Protagonists and Antagonists): These figures form the engine of the plot. The central narrative revolves around their desires, obstacles, and decisions. They drive the action forward and carry the principal thematic weight of the work. Classic examples include Prince Hamlet in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, or Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Minor Characters: Operating in supporting capacities, minor characters provide context, advance subplot lines, offer comic relief, or serve as contrast foils to illuminate the internal traits of major characters. Examples include Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet*, or Unoka, Okonkwo's gentler father, whose traits accentuate Okonkwo's obsession with hyper masculinity.

Dynamic or Developing Characters: These characters experience profound internal evolution, psychological shifts, or moral growth as a result of the crises they endure. Their outlook at the conclusion of the story is fundamentally altered from their initial state.

Static Characters: In contrast, static characters remain virtually unchanged throughout the story. Their core values, temperaments, and behavioral patterns persist unaltered from beginning to end, often serving as anchors or persistent obstacles within the narrative environment.

Symbolic Characters: Figures intentionally crafted to personify abstract ideals, moral virtues, philosophical paradigms, or societal forces. They transcend personal individualism to represent broader human concepts.

The Concept and Art of Characterization

If characters constitute the "who" of a narrative, characterization represents the intricate "how" and "why." Characterization is the deliberate artistic process by which an author introduces, unfolds, and deepens a character's physical appearance, psychological temperament, moral compass, and internal motivations to the reader.

Literary technique broadly divides characterization into two primary methodologies. The first is *Direct Characterization*, or explicit portrayal, where the author or narrator directly states a character's traits to the reader. For instance, stating that John was an immensely courageous man possessing an unwavering dedication to protecting the vulnerable leaves no room for deduction; the trait is explicitly declared.

The second methodology is *Indirect Characterization*, or implicit revelation. Here, the author reveals the character's traits subtly through their

speech, physical actions, private thoughts, personal choices, and interactions with others. When a character consistently risks their safety to assist strangers without seeking praise, the reader infers their compassion naturally without explicit narrative declaration.

Characterization extends far beyond external physical descriptions; it reaches deep into the psychological, emotional, and moral dimensions of existence. By mastering characterization, an author transforms abstract words into authentic human experiences, inviting readers to hold up a mirror to their own lives and reflect upon the universal truths of human nature.

CHAPTER TWO

God as the Author vs. The Literary Writer as an Author

To engage meaningfully with the profound relationship between literature and human experience, one must explore the fundamental concept of authorship. Who is an author, and what does the act of authoring truly entail? When we examine the creative power exercised by a novelist alongside the sovereign creative authority attributed to God Almighty, we discover a profound theological and artistic analogy that illuminates the essence of human existence.

Defining Authorship: The Act of Originating Existence

An author is, first and fundamentally, a creator, an originator who calls into being that which previously had no existence. To author a work is not merely to organize existing elements; it is to forge a unique reality, endowing it with form, identity, rules, and purpose. Before an author puts pen to paper or fingers to keyboard, the world they depict exists solely as an unformed whisper in the creative imagination.

Consider literary history: Chinua Achebe's masterpiece, *Things Fall Apart*, did not exist in the human consciousness until Achebe authored it in 1958. Before his creative act, the vibrant village of Umuofia, the complex figure of Okonkwo, and the nuanced depiction of traditional Igbo society battling colonial encroachment were absent from the literary landscape. Similarly, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* was non existent until she penned it in 2013. Even if another writer had crafted a book under the exact same title,

the internal narrative, emotional resonance, and character portraits would remain entirely distinct. The author bestows upon the work a unique, irreplaceable soul.

The Divine Blacksmith: God as Ultimate Author

When transferred to a theological plane, this concept elevates our understanding of human identity. God is the sovereign, ultimate Author of the universe. He spoke creation into being, organizing stars, oceans, ecosystems, and human souls out of non existence. In Igbo cultural theology, God is frequently reverently addressed as *Uzu Kpuru Mu*, translating eloquently as "The Divine Blacksmith who molded me."

This ancient metaphor beautifully captures the intentionality and craftsmanship behind human existence. Before God authored your life, billions of human beings had traversed the earth over millennia, yet you, your distinct consciousness, your specific combination of traits, your personal spirit, were absent. You were called into existence by deliberate divine design, not by accidental cosmic chance.

This reality echoes the theological insight found in Hebrews 12:2, which urges believers to fix their eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter, or author and finisher, of faith. Just as a literary author originates a narrative, guides its rising action through intense conflicts, and brings it to a satisfying resolution, God is the supreme Author who originates human life and oversees the unfolding drama of faith and destiny.

Comparative Dynamics: Literary Creator vs. Divine Creator

Comparing the earthly writer to the Heavenly Creator reveals essential truths regarding sovereignty, authority, and human purpose across three principal dimensions:

Hierarchy of Authority: The creator always possesses inherently higher authority than the created entity. A fictional character cannot rise up and command the novelist to alter the laws of their world; they exist within the parameters, rules, and context established by their creator. Similarly, human beings exist within the overarching physical and moral frameworks designed by God.

Sovereign Intentionality: No character in a well crafted novel appears without a purpose. If an author introduces a character in Chapter One, that character serves a distinct function within the overarching narrative structure. Likewise, divine authorship implies that no human being is an accidental discharge of cosmic events. Every life possesses intentionality, significance, and an assigned role.

Authorial Responsibility and Care: A true literary artist cares deeply about the internal consistency, dignity, and resonance of their characters. They do not treat their creations carelessly. On an infinitely higher plane, the Divine Author sustains His creation, offering spiritual guidance, moral principles, and grace to navigate life's plot twists.

Recognizing God as the ultimate Author transforms how an individual views their identity, value, and struggles. When life presents difficult chapters, such as seasons of conflict, sorrow, or profound uncertainty, comfort lies in knowing that the Pen remains securely in the hands of a wise, benevolent Creator who understands the end from the beginning.

CHAPTER THREE

The World as a Setting: Time, Space, and Divine Placement

In literary theory, setting encompasses far more than a passive geographic backdrop or a decorative stage where events unfold. Setting refers to the complete historical, geographical, cultural, and socioeconomic environment in which a story's action takes place. A master writer never selects a setting arbitrarily; every location, historical era, and cultural environment is chosen intentionally to shape character development, generate conflict, and accentuate the central theme.

When we apply this literary principle to human existence, we arrive at a thrilling revelation: the world into which you were born is the setting crafted specifically for your life's narrative. You are a living story unfolding within the vast, interconnected world story of human history.

The Significance of Place: Geographical and Cultural Placement

Consider the deliberate nature of setting in classic literature. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, the traditional village of Umuofia is not merely a random African village; it is a meticulously constructed microcosm of pre colonial Igbo society. Achebe situates his protagonist, Okonkwo, in Umuofia because that specific setting, with its ancestral shrines, title taking ceremonies, agricultural rhythms, and strict cultural laws, is essential to test Okonkwo's values and expose the tragic conflict between traditional autonomy and European colonial encroachment.

In the grand narrative of real life, geography is equally non accidental. There is a profound reason why you were born in a specific nation, within a particular state, town, or ancestral village, and raised within a specific family unit. There is divine intentionality behind why Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea during the reign of Caesar Augustus rather than in imperial Rome or ancient Asia. Place matters. Your immediate environment, including your hometown, the schools you attended, the neighborhood you navigate, and the workplace you occupy daily, functions as the refined setting designed to test, train, and mold your character.

The Importance of Time: Historical and Generational Timing

Equally vital as place is the dimension of time. As the ancient wisdom of Ecclesiastes famously records: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Stories do not exist in a vacuum; they erupt within specific temporal windows.

Why did Achebe publish *Things Fall Apart* in 1958? Because the late 1950s was a historical moment when the African continent stood on the threshold of political independence. Eurocentric literature had long depicted Africa as an uncultured, primitive heart of darkness devoid of history or dignity. Achebe's timing was strategic and necessary: he wrote to reclaim the African narrative, proving to the world that African societies possessed complex legal, religious, and artistic structures long before European arrival.

In precisely the same manner, your historical arrival on this planet is governed by divine timing. You were not born in the fifteenth century, nor were you delayed until the twenty third century. You were placed in this precise era, navigating the modern digital age, specific economic realities, and

unique societal challenges, because your character gifts are specifically suited to address the needs of this generation.

Navigating Difficult Settings: The Wilderness as Character Refinement

Frequently in literature, an author deliberately places a protagonist in a hostile, challenging setting: a desert of isolation, a stormy sea, or a corrupt city. Think of Adah in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, thrust into the cold, dreary, and racially hostile environment of 1960s London. Is this environment meant to destroy her? No; the harsh setting serves as the crucible that transforms a timid girl into a resilient, independent, and victorious woman.

If you currently find yourself in a difficult setting, such as a wilderness of financial hardship, an uncomfortable workplace, or a season of personal trial, do not lose heart. Understand that these environmental conditions are integral to your character formation. The Author of Life places His protagonists in challenging settings not to break their spirits, but to forge within them courage, wisdom, and an unbreakable faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Uniqueness of Each Character: Name, Form, and Authenticity

One of the most striking attributes of master storytellers is their refusal to produce repetitive, cookie cutter characters. Every character who steps onto the literary stage brings a distinct voice, a unique physical appearance, an individual name, and an idiosyncratic psychological makeup. As the Psalmist beautifully echoes in Psalm 139:14, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." Uniqueness is the signature mark of purposeful creation.

The Sacred Power of Names and Naming

In literary craftsmanship, names are never mere arbitrary labels; they are potent symbols of identity, thematic indicators, and often prophetic markers of destiny. When Charles Dickens names a miserly, cold hearted character Ebenezer Scrooge, the very sound of the name evokes bitterness and isolation. When Chinua Achebe names his protagonist Okonkwo, meaning a male child born on NKwo market day, it anchors the character firmly within Igbo cosmology and martial tradition.

Consider the ancient biblical account of creation. After God formed the physical earth and created living creatures, He brought them to Adam to see what he would name them. Each name bestowed carried deep intrinsic meaning, defining the creature's identity, role, and nature within the ecological order. God Himself established this principle by renaming key individuals to align with their transformed destinies, changing Abram, meaning "Exalted

Father", to Abraham, meaning "Father of a Multitude", and Jacob, meaning "Supplanter", to Israel, meaning "One who Strives with God".

Your name in the real world is your primary marker of individual identity. It is known, recognized, and recorded by the Divine Author. You are not an anonymous statistic floating through the cosmos; you are a named protagonist in the book of life.

Physical Appearance: Form as a Tool of Destiny

In literary works, physical attributes are deliberately assigned to serve narrative functions. An author decides whether a character is tall or short, frail or muscular, fair skinned or dark, quiet spoken or booming. Physical traits are woven into the plot to influence how other characters interact with them and how they navigate worldly obstacles.

In the real world, your physical form is equally intentional. Among the billions of human inhabitants across the globe, no individual shares your exact fingerprints, voiceprint, or genetic sequence. Your height, complexion, facial structure, bodily constitution, and vocal tone are uniquely tailored by God. To spend your life despising your natural appearance, or desperately seeking to drastically alter your features through excessive artificial interventions or body dysmorphic comparison, is to reject the artistic wisdom of the Creator who designed your physical form to fulfill a specific role.

Attitudinal and Behavioral Distinctions

Beyond names and physical features, characters are distinguished by their internal psychological profiles: their temperaments, behavioral inclinations, emotional responses, and moral outlooks. Some characters are naturally contemplative, analytical, and reserved; others are bold, expressive, and action

driven. Some possess immense emotional empathy, while others excel in logical structure and strategic planning.

This attitudinal diversity is vital for societal harmony. The world does not require endless carbon copies or artificial pretenders. It does not need you to mimic the personality, speech patterns, or lifestyle of another individual. When you attempt to copy someone else's life, you abandon your assigned script, leaving your unique role on the world stage unplayed.

Authentic living requires the courage to embrace the unique blueprint assigned to you by the Author. When you step boldly into your authentic self, celebrating your name, honoring your physical form, and honing your innate personality, you bring honor to your Creator and enrich the grand narrative of human existence.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Purpose of Creating a Character: Roles, Functions, and Destiny

In literary composition, no skilled author introduces a character without a clear, definitive purpose. Whether a character appears on every page as the central hero or utters a single line of dialogue in a minor scene, their presence is calculated to move the plot forward, generate essential conflict, illuminate key themes, or provoke an emotional response from the audience. In a well crafted narrative, useless characters simply do not exist.

Imagine a play where every actor steps onto the stage, forgets their role, and wanders aimlessly without speaking or interacting; the performance would collapse into chaos and absurdity. In precisely the same manner, every human being called into existence by the Divine Author possesses an assigned purpose, a unique function, and a vital contribution to make to the world.

Ecological and Societal Interdependence

Look across the expanse of the natural world: everything created by God serves a precise, complementary function. The sun provides light, heat, and solar energy required for photosynthesis; trees absorb carbon dioxide and release life giving oxygen; rivers supply moisture and nourish aquatic ecosystems; bees pollinate flowers to ensure agricultural yield. Nothing in creation exists purely for itself, and nothing is superfluous.

This principle of purposeful design reaches its apex in human society. Ancient Igbo wisdom captures this truth through two famous proverbs. The

first, *Ekere oru eke*, translates to "There is an intentional division of labor." No single individual possesses all gifts or is ordained to perform every task; function is distributed across humanity to ensure mutual reliance.

The second proverb, *Ofu nne muru, mana ofu chi ekeghi*, translates as "One mother gives birth, but not one spirit destiny creates." Even biological twins born of the exact same womb carry distinctly different callings, talents, and life missions.

Case Study: Functional Purpose in Alex Agyei-Agyiri's Unexpected Joy at Dawn

To understand how characters carry thematic purpose, let us examine Alex Agyei-Agyiri's acclaimed West African novel, *Unexpected Joy at Dawn*. Consider the central protagonist, Nii Tackie. He is not merely a young man navigating social hardship in Ghana and Nigeria; he is crafted by the author to embody the tragic, senseless burden of xenophobia and political displacement in post colonial West Africa.

Similarly, the character of Massa, Nii Tackie's terminally ill partner, serves a profound narrative purpose. Her lingering illness and Nii Tackie's steadfast devotion to her reveal the deep, selfless capacity for love, compassion, and emotional endurance within the human spirit, offering a soft, poetic counterweight to the harsh political hostility surrounding them. Every character in the novel contributes directly to its central message.

Divine Endowment: Equipped for Your Assigned Role

A crucial rule of literary craftsmanship is that an author always equips a character with the necessary traits, abilities, and tools required to fulfill their plot function. If a character is created to be a master detective, the author

endows them with sharp powers of observation and keen logical deduction. If a character is designed to be an inspiring community leader, the author endows them with charismatic eloquence and deep emotional intelligence.

The core axiom of purpose is simple yet profound: You are fully equipped for the role you were born to play. The natural talents, creative inclinations, empathetic drives, and intellectual strengths residing within you are not accidental quirks; they are the custom made equipment provided by the Divine Author to enable you to execute your unique life mission.

When individuals experience persistent confusion, frustration, and emptiness in life, it is almost always because they are trying to play a role assigned to someone else while neglecting the custom script written for their own lives. Discovering your purpose, and developing the innate gifts attached to that purpose, is the single most important quest of human existence.

CHAPTER SIX

The Personality of a Character: Deciphering Identity and Words

In literary criticism, one of the primary assignments of a scholar or reader is character analysis, which involves evaluating who a character truly is behind their external appearance. When examining a play or novel, we cannot simply take a character at face value; we must analyze their behavioral patterns, psychological motivations, and moral core.

In classic literary theory, there exist four established methods for deciphering and evaluating a character's true identity: through what the character says, through what the character does, through what other characters say about them, and through what the Author directly reveals about them. Fascinatingly, these four methods of literary character analysis represent the exact same ways we evaluate human beings in real life.

1. What the Character Says (Words and Diction)

Speech is the primary medium through which characters express their inner world to others. An author grants characters the freedom of dialogue. A proud character's speech will consistently display arrogance and condescension; a wise character's words will radiate reflection and restraint; a deceitful character's speech will be laced with flattery and subtle manipulation.

In real life, your words are a direct window into your soul. As sacred scripture explicitly confirms in Matthew 12:34: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Your words are the clothing of your thoughts.

However, relying solely on words can be misleading: characters, like humans, can lie, flatter, utter foolishness in moments of temporary confusion, or speak out of profound ignorance of their own true state.

2. What the Character Does (Actions and Inactions)

Actions speak with an eloquence that words can rarely match. In literary analysis, a critic judges a character primarily by their concrete behavior. In Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, when we evaluate the character of Francis Obi, we do not call him an irresponsible, cruel husband simply because of rumors; we classify him as such because he refuses to work to support his family, physically assaults his wife Adah, and commits the monstrous act of burning her written book manuscript.

Furthermore, inaction is itself a profound form of action. A father who stands passively by while his children starve or suffer abuse is judged for his negligence. In real life, human characters will ultimately be judged by their actions and inactions, such as how they treated the vulnerable, the hungry, the stranger, and the oppressed.

3. What Other Characters Say (The Flawed Mirror)

Gathering the opinions of peers and associate characters provides valuable clues, but it is an inherently flawed diagnostic tool. Other characters are limited, fallible, and often biased. Other characters may spread false rumors, blackmail, or smear a protagonist out of intense envy or political rivalry. Furthermore, peer characters are not omniscient; they cannot read private thoughts or witness secret acts of repentance. People often summarize a person's entire identity based on a single mistake, deliberately ignoring their intelligence, virtues, or spiritual transformation.

4. What the Author Says: The Ultimate Standard of Truth

This brings us to the only completely authentic, error free, and infallible method of character assessment: what the Author says about the character. The author is the creator, possessing omniscient insight into the character's hidden thoughts, past trauma, silent motives, and future destiny. A character may be confused about themselves, and society may misjudge them entirely, but the Author never errs. In *Second Class Citizen*, when Emecheta writes that Adah possessed a deep, indomitable dream inside her soul from age eight, it is absolute, unassailable truth.

Consider the biblical account in Matthew 16, where Jesus asked His disciples who men said He was. They replied with popular peer character assessments, guessing John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah. These human assessments were flawed and incomplete. But when Peter declared Him to be the Christ, Jesus affirmed that this revelation came directly from the Heavenly Father, the Divine Author. Your true identity is not what human opinion declares; it is what your Author has declared concerning you.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Your Life as a Story and You as the Central Character

Every human life possesses a distinct narrative architecture. Human existence is not an aimless sequence of random physical collisions; it is a structured story containing a beginning, a rising development, intense climax points, falling action, and an ultimate conclusion. Within the story of your life, you occupy the supreme position: you are the central protagonist.

The Author's Surrogate: Representing the Creator

In advanced literary theory, scholars frequently identify a special character known as the Author's Surrogate. The surrogate is the protagonist who directly embodies the author's personal philosophy, core values, worldview, and emotional voice within the fictional world. For example, Adah Ofili in Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* serves as Emecheta's autobiographical surrogate, echoing her struggles, resilience, and literary ambitions.

As a character authored by God, you are created in His image to serve as His surrogate ambassador on earth. You are called to represent divine love, justice, wisdom, and truth within the immediate world you inhabit. When people look at your life, choices, and character, they ought to glimpse the values of the Author who designed you.

Analyzing the Plot Structure of Life: Freytag’s Pyramid

In 1863, German critic Gustav Freytag formulated a classic structural paradigm mapping narrative plot into distinct stages. Comparing Freytag's Pyramid to human life reveals amazing structural parallels:

Exposition (Infancy and Formative Years): The narrative opening that establishes the setting, family background, socioeconomic conditions, and initial environmental influences shaping the child.

Inciting Incident (Adolescence and Young Adulthood): The decisive moment when the individual reaches moral maturity and begins making personal choices, such as selecting career paths, ethical values, spiritual beliefs, and personal friendships independent of parents.

Rising Action (Adult Striving and Conflicts): The long, intense middle season of life filled with relentless struggles, career pursuit, marital bonding, and confronting antagonist forces like internal doubts, societal barriers, and spiritual battles.

Climax (Peak Achievement and Ultimate Testing): The emotional peak of life where major goals are confronted and achieved, including reaching career pinnacles, raising families, and establishing legacies. Crucially, the climax is also the supreme testing ground: how a person manages success, wealth, and power reveals their true moral character.

Falling Action (Mature Reflection and Transition): The mature years following life's peak. Depending on how the climax was navigated, this phase brings either peaceful mentorship and fulfillment, or the tragic onset of regret and reversal of fortunes.

Resolution and Denouement (Final Conclusion and Legacy): The untying of all narrative knots. Life concludes, leaving behind an enduring legacy, a completed manuscript, and a transition to divine evaluation.

The Protagonist Antagonist Dynamics

No compelling story can exist without opposition. The moment a protagonist sets out to achieve a noble destiny, antagonist forces inevitably arise to block, frustrate, and challenge their progress. In literature, antagonists can be external villains, systemic societal injustices, or internal psychological flaws.

In Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen*, Francis Obi functions as the primary antagonist against his wife Adah, undermining her ambitions and abusing her trust. In real life, opposition is an unavoidable component of your plot line. Antagonists may emerge in the form of envious peers, difficult family dynamics, institutional discrimination, or health crises. Do not allow opposition to paralyze you; recognize that without formidable obstacles to overcome, a protagonist cannot demonstrate true heroism, resilience, and faith.

As the central protagonist of your life, you occupy the driver's seat. Dependents, family members, and future generations are passengers in your vehicle. If you lose focus, succumb to temptation, or abandon your post, those linked to your destiny suffer. Drive with sobriety, determination, and spiritual focus.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Tragic Hero and Tragic Flaws: The Vulnerabilities That Ruin Men

The history of classical and modern literature is littered with the tragic wrecks of potentially extraordinary heroes. In dramatic theory, a tragedy occurs when a noble, highly gifted, and admired protagonist suffers a catastrophic downfall, ending in destruction, dishonor, or death. When we analyze why these heroes fall, we discover a sobering truth: their ruin is rarely caused by external enemies alone. It is engineered from within by a subtle, unaddressed weakness known as a Tragic Flaw.

In classical Greek poetics, the tragic flaw is called *Hamartia*, a word originating from archery meaning "to miss the mark" or err in judgment. A tragic flaw is a fatal moral defect, psychological vulnerability, or unchecked habit that, when pampered and left unrefined, grows into a monster capable of destroying a glorious destiny.

Anatomy of the Five Great Tragic Flaws

1. Excessive Pride (Hubris): Hubris is the undisputed monarch of tragic flaws. It begins deceptively as healthy self confidence, but gradually mutates into toxic arrogance, self conceit, and contempt for advice. The proud hero begins to view themselves as invincible, above cultural laws, moral boundaries, and divine authority.

Consider Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Okonkwo is industrious, brave, and immensely titled, yet his hyper masculine pride and

terror of being perceived as weak blind him completely. He slays Ikemefuna, a boy who called him father, violates the sacred Week of Peace by beating his wife, and stubbornly rejects peaceful diplomatic adaptation. Ultimately, his unchecked hubris leads him to commit the ultimate Igbo abomination of taking his own life. Pride blindfolds a hero right before leading them over a cliff.

2. Drunkenness and Substance Intoxication: Drunkenness represents the surrender of self control, mental clarity, and sound judgment to intoxicating substances. A protagonist destined for greatness cannot afford a clouded mind. Sacred scripture sternly warns that strong drink is a mocker that leads leaders into disgrace. Countless promising careers, marriages, and lives have been incinerated in moments of alcoholic stupor or drug addiction.

3. Uncontrolled Rage and Excessive Anger: Anger is a natural human emotion, but uncontrolled rage is an explosive substance. In Ola Rotimi's classic tragedy, *The Gods Are Not to Blame*, the protagonist King Odewale's tragic downfall is not engineered primarily by divine fate, but by his quick, fierce, uncontrollable temper. In a fit of tribal pride and rage at a crossroad, he slays an old man, unwittingly murdering his biological father King Adetusa and fulfilling the horrifying prophecy. A single minute of unbridled rage can destroy a reputation constructed over thirty years.

4. Inordinate Ambition and Greed: Greed is the insatiable hunger for wealth, political power, or social prominence at the total expense of morality and human empathy. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Macbeth begins as a valiant, honored general. However, once infected by inordinate ambition, he murders his benevolent king, assassinates his closest friends, and transforms into a bloodthirsty tyrant, ultimately losing his crown, his sanity, and his life.

5. Sexual Lust and Immorality: Lust is perhaps the most devastatingly common tragic flaw in human history. It has stripped kings of their crowns,

destroyed brilliant scholars, collapsed mega churches, and wrecked stable families. The biblical tragedy of Samson remains the ultimate archetype: endowed with supernatural physical strength to liberate a nation, Samson refused to tame his lustful appetites, ending up blinded, chained, and mocked in a Philistine dungeon.

Self Mastery: Taming the Flaw Within

Every hero carries a potential flaw within their temperament. The difference between a fulfilled protagonist and a tragic failure lies not in the complete absence of vulnerability, but in the willingness to identify, confront, and tame that vulnerability through discipline, humility, and divine grace before it tames you.

CHAPTER NINE

Discovering Who and What the Author Made You to Be

The greatest tragedy on earth is not physical death; it is living an entire lifetime as a character without characterization, a human actor who steps onto the world stage, completely forgets their script, and spends decades aimlessly wandering, imitating others, and performing roles they were never authored to play. Such individuals become confused messengers, carrying messages they were never assigned to deliver.

Ancient scripture describes a tragic situational irony in Ecclesiastes 10:7: "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth." What causes this profound inversion of destiny? It is the disease of spiritual and existential ignorance. The princes walk on foot in hardship simply because they do not know they are princes.

Five Practical Pathways to Self Discovery

How does a human protagonist break free from existential confusion and discover their authentic identity and calling? There exist five reliable pathways:

1. Audit Your Inherent Abilities and Talents: The Divine Author never assigns a mission without providing the embedded tools. Examine yourself closely: What natural abilities, artistic talents, technical aptitudes, or communicative strengths operate effortlessly within you? The capabilities

embedded in your nature are practical breadcrumbs pointing directly toward your assigned function.

2. Identify What Brings Deep Internal Fulfillment: Pay close attention to activities that generate genuine internal joy, deep satisfaction, and timeless engagement. What activities do you perform passionately, even without monetary compensation? Whether it is teaching, comforting the sick, solving complex mathematical equations, writing, or organizing communities, fulfillment is a powerful compass indicating alignment with your core purpose.

3. Analyze the Problems That Disturb Your Spirit: Every protagonist is authored to solve a specific category of problems in the world. What societal challenges, injustices, or human sufferings arouse intense passion, grief, or righteous indignation within your heart? If you are deeply troubled by educational neglect, your calling touches teaching and youth mentorship; if institutional injustice infuriates you, your calling connects to law, advocacy, or leadership.

4. Inquire Directly of the Author Director Through Prayer: When an actor on a theater stage becomes confused regarding their positioning or dialogue, the most logical step is to step backstage and consult the Playwright Director. Prayer is precisely this consultation. Humbly approaching God in prayer, asking why He created you and what your assignment is, brings clarity to confused messengers.

5. Return to the Script (The Sacred Word): The ultimate manual containing the characterization of human beings is Sacred Scripture. It provides the definitive description of your spiritual identity. Consider how Jesus Christ established His earthly mission: He entered the synagogue in Nazareth, unrolled the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah, and read His specific script: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the

gospel to the poor..." Christ discovered Himself in the written Word. In the exact same manner, as you immerse yourself in Sacred Scripture, the mirror of truth will reflect your true identity: declaring that you are fearfully made, a light to the world, a royal priesthood, and an overcomer designed for good works.

CHAPTER TEN

Poetic Justice: The Character's Rewards, Punishments, and Ultimate Judgment

In literary theory, Poetic Justice refers to a structural outcome in a narrative where virtue is ultimately rewarded with honor, peace, or redemption, and vice or cruelty is punished with appropriate, fitting, and ironic downfall. It is rooted in the deep seated moral conviction that the universe is governed by an indelible law of moral equilibrium, a principle mirrored in the Eastern concept of Karma and codified in Christian theology as the Law of the Harvest: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Poetic Justice in African Literary Classics

Let us examine how poetic justice operates within seminal literary works. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, poetic justice manifests powerfully in the tragic demise of Okonkwo. Throughout his life, Okonkwo relies fanatically on physical violence, hyper masculinity, and unyielding rigidity to assert dominance. He slays Ikemefuna, beats his family, and refuses cultural adaptation. In the end, he hangs himself on a tree, an act considered an abomination requiring his body to be buried like a dog by strangers. He is destroyed poetically by the very weapon of unchecked violence he worshipped.

Similarly, in John Kargbo's political drama *Let Me Die Alone*, Queen Yoko rises to power through political manipulation, cruelty, and ruthless disregard for human life. She ignores the suspicious disappearance of her companion

Jeneba to pursue colonial favor. Her eventual downfall, loneliness, and miserable death satisfy the audience's moral requirement that tyrannical abuse of power must not escape retribution.

Catharsis: Emotional Restoration of the Audience

When an audience watches a play or reads a novel, they invest deep emotional energy. When wicked characters flourish without consequence, readers feel profound moral discomfort. However, when poetic justice occurs at the climax, when evil is punished and the righteous are vindicated, the audience experiences Catharsis.

First articulated by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, catharsis is the purging or emotional cleansing of pity and fear. Catharsis reassures human consciousness that moral order, cosmic balance, and ultimate justice govern existence.

Life Beyond the Last Page: Death and Eternal Judgment

In literary criticism, there is a famous adage: "When the story ends, criticism begins." Once a book is closed, scholars gather to evaluate the performance, choices, and moral legacy of every character. In human life, physical death marks the final page of our earthly manuscript. Yet, as universal religious traditions declare, death is not annihilation; it is the transition to authorial evaluation. As the Epistle to the Hebrews unequivocally declares: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Every word spoken, every secret action taken, and every choice made throughout your lifetime is a sentence written in your personal book of life. When your narrative reaches its final denouement, the Divine Author will review the manuscript. Live consciously, honorably, and purposefully, so that

when your story ends, the Author's final verdict will be: "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord."